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764 The funeral customs are almost similar among all groups of Georgian Highlanders, as well as their kinsmen in the Lowlands. Only it must be noted that the Khevsurs have a special attitude toward the body of a deceased person, which they regard, as did the Hebrews of the Old Testament, as unclean. People are appointed to wash the body and bury it. They are called *narevebi*. When the dead person is a woman, the *narevebi* are girls; when it is a man, the young men perform the task. The *narevebi* are regarded as unclean for a certain period of time and are the subject of special taboos and regulations similar to those prescribed by the Mosaic laws.

All customs connected with the funeral ceremonies and the attitude of the people toward the dead person can be explained in the manner of interpretation and the beliefs which they hold about the life beyond the grave and the existence of spirits.[a] The funeral ceremonies, a description of which we are not undertaking at present, are numerous, complicated in detail, and require such large expenditures that the grief-stricken family is seldom able to pay all the necessary expenses without heavy material losses and even financial ruin without the support of their kinsmen, which support, however, is customarily given.

776 753 On the beliefs in the existence of spirits (good and evil) is founded also the conviction of the people that every possible calamity, misfortune, sickness and death originate with these evil spirits. They are regarded not only as the cause of sickness but as the personification of illness itself, and are called *batonebi*, meaning "lords," representing the plural form of the Georgian word *batoni* (lord). They are also called *angelozebi* (angels), which is also the plural form of the word *angelozi* (angel). In this case we have the terming of spirits with names taken from the Christian religion, a frequently occurring phenomenon in the Caucasus—the mixture of Christianity with the ideas of primitive religion.

These beliefs are present among all groups of the Georgian nation. Thus, for example, the Georgians of the Thelav District, Department of Tiflis,[57] believe that "all epidemic diseases have

[57] Stepanov: 99. [See cat. III, p 42-44 --Analyst]

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their own angels, called *angelozebi* or *batonebi,* meaning lords. Because of their presence the people fall ill with smallpox, typhoid fever, scarlet fever, and other contagious diseases. When someone becomes ill it is not necessary to appeal to the physicians and their remedies, because by such action it is possible to offend and anger the angels of sickness. . . ." And as the only remedy in curing the sick person, the people must "please" the evil spirits with every kind of performance—dancing, singing, playing on the various musical instruments, decorating the sick person's room, etc.; and beseeching them to leave the sick person.

The information concerning the existence of similar beliefs and practices is reported from all parts of Georgia, as, for example, in the writings of T. Mamaladze,[58] A. Sagaradze,[59] Japaridze, and others.

In every kind of mischief the people try to find out the possible cause, as they think, of the anger of the spirits by various means of divination. There are different ranks of diviners, known under their Georgian names as *mlotsavi, mkitkhavi, mesultane,* and *kadagi.*

A *mlotsavi* is a person of either sex, who knows special prayers for every kind of illness and affliction. The name *mlotsavi* is derived from the Georgian word *lotsva,* meaning "a prayer." The people believe that the *mlotsavi* can heal by his prayers because he enjoys special favors in the eyes of the spirits and that his prayers will be answered and the sick man restored to health.

The prayers which are said by the *mlotsavi* are interesting for their figurative language as well as for the psychological phenomenon which they express. As examples we mention the prayers recorded by Japaridze,[60] and Mindeli[61] from the province of Ratcha; those recorded by Mamaladze[62] from the province of Guria; and those recorded by V. Bardavelidze-Lomia[63] from the province of Kartli.

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[58] Mamaladze: 45-6.
[59] Sagaradze.
[60] Japaridze: 131-37.
[61] Mindeli: 138.
[62] Mamaladze: 110-12.
[63] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 104.

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The same cleansing power of fire is used by the Khevsur woman at the time of her purification when she leaves the menstrual hut (*samrevlo*) and returns home with her baby.

Many other peoples of the Caucasus share the Georgians' belief in the supernatural power of fire.[42] Thus, for example, the Abkhazians,[43] in order to protect women in childbed from the evil spirit, called *abn-ikou,* ask the help of the god of the house-hearth, called *ajakhar,* promising him a thank-offering for his help.

The people also believe in the protective power of a rope in the shape of a snake. For example, in the district of Sakatali, a rope resembling a snake is laid around the woman in childbed and the people continually fire their guns, because they believe that evil spirits are afraid of snakes and gun-shots.

In some parts of Georgia red thread is also used as a defense against the evil spirits attacking women in childbed. In such cases, the hip of the woman in travail is bound with red thread as a means of providing sympathetic magic which will protect her from evil spirits[44] who, as the people think, cause the suffering.

It should be interesting to mention briefly the belief of the Georgians, not only in the magical power of red thread, but in the red color generally. Almost every contagious disease is understood by the people to be sent not merely by evil spirits but as personifications of the spirits themselves.[45] Therefore, to cure the sick it is necessary, in their opinion, to please the spirits. The spirits are called *batonebi,* meaning "lords," the plural form of the Georgian word, *batoni,* meaning a lord. In order to appease and beseech the *batonebi*[46] to depart from sick persons, they try to please them with songs, music, prayers, decorating the room with gay colors, putting on a new dress, keeping everything clean, avoiding any disturbances, etc.

The principal color in decorating and dressing is red. This color predominates, and red thread is used as a protective

[42] Chursin: f.
[43] Derjavin: 14-15.
[44] Jashvili: 63.
[45] Stepanov: 88-9.
[46] Mamaladze: 45-6.